



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

News Release

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Contact: Craig McLaughlin, State Board of Health, (360) 236-4106

State Board of Health and American Indian Health Commission meet jointly to discuss Indian health initiatives

Wednesday, January 9, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Wa He Lut Indian School, Frank's Landing Indian Community, 11110 Conine Ave SE, Olympia, Wash.

Olympia—The Washington State Board of Health and the American Indian Health Commission will both meet January 9, 2002 at the Wa He Lut Indian School in the Frank's Landing Indian Community near Olympia. The two bodies will convene separately in the morning but will reconvene for a combined afternoon session to discuss whether to jointly recommend efforts that would reduce health disparities for American Indians/Alaska Natives. The efforts would honor the work of Sue Crystal, the administrator of Health Care Authority who passed away last year.

"The Washington State Board of Health and the American Indian Health Commission are committed to eliminating health disparities of American Indians and Alaska Natives," said Joe Finkbonner, a Board member and a past chair of the Commission. "These initiative options are proposed in honor of Sue Crystal's contributions to improving health and living conditions for all Americans, and especially for American Indians in Washington."

Compared to Caucasians, American Indians/Alaska Natives in Washington are twice as likely to die in infancy, nearly twice as likely to die from cervical cancer, and 2.5 times more likely to die from diabetes, according to a 2001 report by the Board. American Indians are seven times more likely to contract tuberculosis and 1.5 times more likely to die from asthma, the report states.

The Board's morning session will include a review of a proposed draft of the State Health Report, which is required by statute. The Board has been working with representatives of the Governor's Subcabinet on Health and others to identify a limited number of strategic health policy directions the state might focus on in the 2003-2005 biennium. The Board will decide whether to forward the draft to the governor for review.

Copies of the agenda and related materials are available by contacting the Board of Health or by visiting the board's Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/sboh/>.

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The State Board of Health serves the citizens of Washington by working to understand and prevent disease across the entire population. Established in 1889 by the State Constitution, the Board provides leadership by suggesting public health policies and actions, by regulating certain activities, and by providing a public forum. The governor appoints ten members who fill three-year terms. Visit the board's Web site at www.doh.wa.gov/sboh/.